



Jaime Barrios



Manuel Cordero

La CIA

Lively exchange marks Borah panel discussion

By Wendy Taylor

The implications of past and present CIA covert action in Latin America, along with the moral and ethical questions of whether the U.S. should be involved there at all, sparked one of the liveliest panel discussions a Borah Symposium audience has seen in years.

"This is getting good," said one audience member as David Phillips, the former CIA chief

of Latin America and Caribbean operations and Ralph McGehee, a former CIA agent, got into an argument on the level of "I didn't say that," "Yes, you did." Phillips was disputing McGehee's interpretation of a passage in his book.

About 600 people attended the final session of this year's symposium in the University of Idaho Student Union Ballroom Tuesday night. Most

stayed until it ended at 10.

Moderator Laurence Birns opened the session by inviting former CIA agents — including the agency's former director, William Colby — to "spill the beans."

"This could be the Moscow moment," Birns joked. "David Phillips could really become a famous man today if he has the guts not be cowed by Bill Colby

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and uses this opportunity to confess."

Phillips shot back: "I'm David Phillips, not Gordon Liddy."

No one else accepted Birns' invitation, although there were plenty of recriminations for alleged past actions on the part of the intelligence agency.

Whether the CIA actually pulled the trigger in the 1973 military coup that assassinated Chilean President Salvador Allende is beside the point, said the critics of the CIA.

The agency, reportedly following orders from then U.S. Presi-

dent Richard Nixon, put Chile in such an untenable economic position that a coup was inevitable, speakers said.

However, Colby exhorted the panel and the audience not to look at events in Chile and other places as black and white. It's always much more complicated than that, he said.

Chilean exile Jaime Barrios said one of the apparent contradictions is that when the U.S. helped depose Allende's government, it ended more than 50 years of democracy in Chile, which he said has been replaced by a totalitarian government.

If covert action is to be a part of the administration's policy, it should be reduced to more manageable proportions, Phillips said. He retired from the CIA in 1975,

and in September of that year he was questioned by former Idaho Sen. Frank Church's committee to investigate covert action.

"My recommendation to the astonishment of my colleagues was that covert action should be taken away from the CIA," Phillips said. "I proposed a small office reporting to the Congress and the executive should be established. The number of employees should be limited to 100 persons," including secretaries and janitors, he said.

In his book, "Deadly Deceits," McGehee describes the CIA as "the covert action arm of the President's foreign policy advisers," which "as noted in the Church Committee's final report, the agency's task is to develop an international anti-communist ideology."

Manuel Cordero, Nicaragua's deputy ambassador to the U.S., criticized the Reagan administration for establishing what he called the CIA's "proxy" army in neighboring Honduras, and the strikes against schools and health institutions.

Barrios asked who benefited from the 1973 coup in Chile. "How were the U.S. interests served? How is the image of America enhanced?"

That question was echoed by Michael Harrington, a former congressman from Massachusetts. He asked what kind of example is America setting to its young people and to the rest of the world.

McGehee said the U.S. justifies intervention by strewing a trail of red herrings, manufacturing a Soviet presence in areas that might be strategically advantageous. "Grenada was about to take over the U.S. with seven warehouses full of weapons, according to President Reagan. We got there just in time."

While denying that he was trying to defend all CIA actions, Colby said that, "behind the picture one finds a very mixed picture." He acknowledged that the CIA did continue operations in Chile after Allende came to power in 1970, but the examples he gave included things like helping supply newsprint to a newspaper the government was trying to stifle.

Barrios responded that even that "was an intolerable intrusion in Chilean affairs. Even to have spent \$1 to alter the Chilean process," was wrong, he said. *CC*